

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

## 06\_06.30.2010

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MORPHOSIS GETS APPROVAL FOR COLLEGE OUTPOST IN LA



COURTESY MORPHOSIS

## HOLLYWOOD'S GRANDE ARCHE

Morphosis' satellite building in Hollywood for Boston-based Emerson College was approved on May 29 by the LA Planning Commission. The 125,000-square-foot Emerson Center will be the permanent home for the college's **continued on page 4**

SANTA MONICA PLANNING APPROVES TALLER BUILDING HEIGHTS

## REACHING FOR THE SKIES



SNAPS/FICKR

As part of a larger revision of the city's zoning codes, the Santa Monica Planning Commission voted in favor of increasing the city's maximum building heights last month, a move it claimed would improve the city's architecture and make buildings more green. Building heights could rise an additional two to six feet, which may not seem like much, but the impact on the city is likely to be big, which has both supporters and critics out in force. If approved by Santa Monica City Council, the change would be part of the first comprehensive alteration to the city's Land Use and Circulation Elements (LUCE), a set of policies and programs that have been a blueprint for the city's physical **continued on page 3**

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NEW SCIENCE CENTER MERGES SCIENCE AND RELIGION

## AND THEN THERE WAS ARCHITECTURE

The lines between religion, science, and architecture are strangely blurred at Azusa Pacific University's new Segerstrom Science Center, located **continued on page 11**



ART GRAY

LA ORDERS LANTERN BUILDING CHOPPED TO SIZE



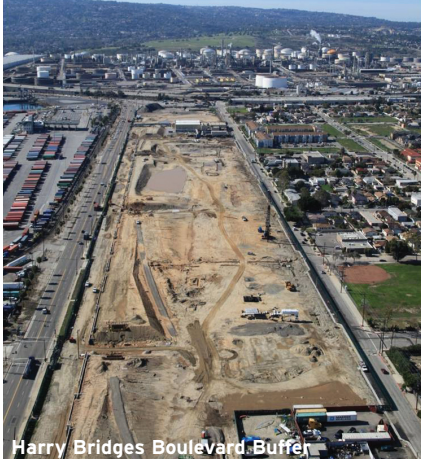
BELA TEMESVARY

## TOO TALL

On June 3, Venice's M Cube, a floating, prefab, minimalist apartment building designed by architect Mark Baez, was at 32 feet determined by LA's City Council to be two feet above local height restrictions. The result, said Baez, will probably be destruction of the structure.

"To fix it would cost more than it cost to erect it in the first place," the architect said, adding that if the roof were lowered, the top floor of the building **continued on page 9**

CA PORT CITY DEVELOPING ITS OWN ELEVATED PARK



Harry Bridges Boulevard Buffer

COURTESY PORT OF LA

## HIGH LINE WEST?

With the runaway success of New York's High Line, it's not surprising that other cities are developing similar projects. Even LA's portside neighbor Wilmington, a place known primarily **continued on page 7**

LA AGENCY FACES DIFFICULT TIMES HOLDING ON TO FUNDING

## CRA BABY

While no public office has prospered in the current economic climate, it's been a particularly tumultuous time for the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA). In early May, a state judge ruled that the California legislature had not violated the state constitution in seizing some \$2 billion **continued on page 3**

SERIOUS GEHRY IN FUN VEGAS. SEE PAGE 10



MATT CARBONE





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## CALLING THE SHOTS

After all the drama related to SFMOMA's museum expansion shortlist—the lack of local firms, the lack of diversity, the lack of transparency—you'd think that California architecture patrons would learn their lesson. Apparently, not.

The culprit this time is none other than Eli Broad, the LA billionaire who has helped bankroll many of LA's recent major institutional projects, including the Broad Contemporary Art Museum, the Broad Stage, LA High School #9, and more. And now, Broad is planning a new museum for the city featuring his impressive contemporary art collection. Although he has announced neither a site nor an architect for the project, he is sending out signals that he may have already settled on both (Diller Scofidio + Renfro for the museum; downtown Los Angeles for the site).

All this secrecy and leaking, while a great way to play municipalities off each other and attract publicity, is upsetting and unproductive. Just as SFMOMA should think more about hiring local firms, Broad and his future museum should think more about making their selection process public, not cryptically closed.

The public deserves to be at the table because whether in downtown LA or Santa Monica, Broad will be banking on public funding. The downtown deal depends on the city and county of LA leasing Broad a prime spot of land next to the Disney Concert Hall for \$1 per year for 99 years. The Santa Monica deal hinges on that city giving Broad a 2.5-acre site a few blocks from the beach, at the same giveaway rate of \$1 per year for 99 years.

Besides this obvious civic obligation, Broad owes it to the people of Los Angeles to have a say in their next major cultural center. Without it we'll be looking at business as usual in a city that seems to see the public process as a joke, or at most a rude inconvenience. Where was the public process in choosing AECOM to design the downtown police headquarters? And where was the public review for any of Broad's other projects, for that matter?

Broad thus far refuses to go public, and won't cede control to anyone outside his tight circle. Instead, we keep hearing about a list of major firms through "inside sources." These firms have included, for the record, Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & de Meuron, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Christian de Portzamparc, Morphosis, and SANAA, to name a few. All are great firms, but none can guarantee that LA will get something great, especially with the city's record of getting mediocre results from great architects (Piano's BCAM? Moneo's Lady of the Angels?). Whether public money should finance Broad's new venture at all is another question that seems to have been tabled for now.

We hope Broad will at least publicly reveal the names of his shortlist to allow for public criticism and debate. And perhaps we'll be able to review plans and ideas before the process moves beyond input. It's the democratic thing to do.

**SAM LUBELL**

**CRA BABY** continued from front page

from hundreds of local redevelopment authorities across the state, including the CRA/LA. Shortly afterward, the agency named its new director, Christine Essel, to replace Cecilia Estolano, whom many think was pushed out by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Meanwhile, a precipitous drop in tax income had left the agency's budget hurting before the state even got involved.

The Sacramento Superior Court judge's ruling on funding will siphon about \$85 million from the CRA/LA's budget over the next two years. That money will be used to cover educational shortfalls within the state's budget. Last year, the state's CRAs fought a similar move in court and won, but this time they failed, severely limiting the agency's work on projects like small business loans, infrastructure, new parks, affordable housing, and private development. CRA spokesperson Mary Nemick estimates that the cuts will result in a loss of 2,300 construction jobs and a loss of \$360 million in private investment for the city. Due to the state's wrangling, along with the drop in local tax increment finance revenues, the CRA's estimated budget next year will be down 14 percent to \$586 million, noted Nemick.

A group representing the 397 authorities has already announced plans to appeal the state ruling and is requesting a stay on the fund seizure pending that appeal. "The state's action is shortsighted and does not move the state forward or address the needs of working families throughout Los Angeles and our state," Essel told AN.

Essel is a former senior vice president of government and community affairs for Paramount Pictures, and before that had been an airport commissioner for Villaraigosa. She was also board chair of the Central City Association in 2007 and 2008. She ran unsuccessfully for city council last year. Her predecessor, Estolano, claims that she left the agency of her own accord, but several have said she was forced out after a fight with the mayor around the CRA's relocation from its centrally-situated downtown headquarters to the Garland Building on the western edge of downtown. In retrospect, that move may have signaled the agency's fall from grace to hard times. **SL**

**REACHING FOR THE SKIES** continued from front page development since 1984. With the updated version set to take effect this month, it has the potential to reshape the city for decades to come.

Proponents of the change argue that increased building heights would not diminish Santa Monica's cityscape, and that taller buildings would even help the environment: Higher ceilings allow for more light to seep into a room, thus reducing utility costs.

Neighborhood activists have said that these recommendations are coming too late in the game—community members do not have enough time to evaluate the pros and cons of the height increase. In a letter about

this and other changes to LUCE, seven local groups accused the commission of "engaging in a blatant attempt to derail the core vision and policies of the LUCE," adding pro-development items after the fact.

LUCE sub-committee chairman Chris Harding told *The Santa Monica Daily Press* that the moves were meant to improve local building design and make development more practical. "If the vast majority of people in these [neighborhood] groups knew the facts and knew how inaccurate their letter was, they would be embarrassed by it," Harding said.

Some architects are skeptical due to the monetary concerns behind Santa Monica's

plans. "Developers want to squeeze as much square footage out of a project as possible," said architect Jennifer Liu. "I'm sure they'll make any argument to get the Planning Department to give them more developable space," she added.

But even though developers have their own agenda, Liu agrees with those advocating taller buildings. "Taller buildings can mean higher density, which when done appropriately is more sustainable—less sprawl, more landscaped area." She added: "It's not just about the building height. It's also about where it sits. What's appropriate for downtown San Francisco is probably not appropriate for Santa Monica." **ZEN VUONG**

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OPEN> BOUTIQUE



> **9026 EYES**  
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In putting together its second boutique for luxury eyewear merchant 9026 Eyes, LA firm MASHstudios had to overcome some tough challenges: Fit a comfortable, trendy store into just 300 square feet of space, and balance the client's demand to be beachy, retro, and contemporary all at the same time.

The beachy element of the tiny Malibu store is manifested through solid teak driftwood-like drawers, bright white walls, distressed details, and airy atmosphere. The throwback vibe, inspired by the Malibu pier and its famous Country Mart, comes from medium-toned wood, midcentury-inspired foldout bobby-legged tables, and eclectic seating. The rest is all modern: minimal and built-in display cases with backlighting that gives the glasses a unique glow. Sleek lines lead the eye straight into the store.

Meanwhile, the architects shrunk all the cabinets and desks by ten to 20 percent and installed sliding, inset cabinets to maximize space. Luckily, the ceiling, which the firm cleaned up and repainted, is fairly high.

"It's not easy to avoid being super claustrophobic while maximizing the display and having enough product on sale," noted principal Bernard Brucha. **SL**

HARIS SARANTIS

EAVESDROP> THE EDITORS

## SF PLANNING, A MELODRAMA

After a web porn sting that will probably cost a few employees their jobs, we now learn that Lance Farber, the ex-boyfriend of SF planning director **John Rahaim**, has passed away. In 2008, Farber was convicted of setting fire to a mattress in the city-owned home where he and Rahaim had been living. According to the San Francisco Medical Examiner's office, the cause of death has still not been determined (Farber died well over a month ago). Meanwhile, Rahaim has taken some time off while the department continues to reel.

## NOT A PATRON OF ARCHITECTURE

One of the most famous buildings in LA, AC Martin's DWP Building, is rumored to be on the market. New DWP interim general manager **Austin Beutner** told the *LA Times* that he is serious about trying to sell the utility's 17-story office building on Hope Street to a private buyer, who would lease offices back to the agency on a long-term basis. "Do you want to own a building, or do you want to have renewable energy?" he said. "You pick. I don't care. If you like the building better, that's fine. You can't have both."

## PLANE HYPE

Architect **David Hertz** is closing in on the completion of what promises to be a most talked-about house. Hertz's Malibu Wing Home, built from the parts of a retired 747, is about three months away from taking flight. And already it's getting serious press coverage: Fox News, Yahoo, Inhabitat, and Curbed LA have all reported on the still-unfinished house, which reportedly needed approval from 17 government agencies to get clearance. The house uses the wings and tail as roof sections. But can you smoke in the lavatory?

## GOOGLE HOUSE SEARCH

Despite being one of the richest people in the world, Google co-founder **Sergey Brin** has long lived in an apartment in Silicon Valley. Finally he's moving into a real house. The winner of the invited competition to design his modern mansion is none other than San Francisco architect **Ole Lundberg**. Others on the shortlist of about six or seven contenders included SF architects **David Baker** and **Cass Calder Smith**. More details on this megaproject as we get them. Soon, something new to search on Google's satellite maps!

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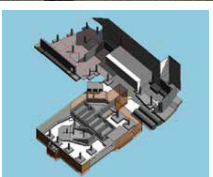


### California Science Center Phase II

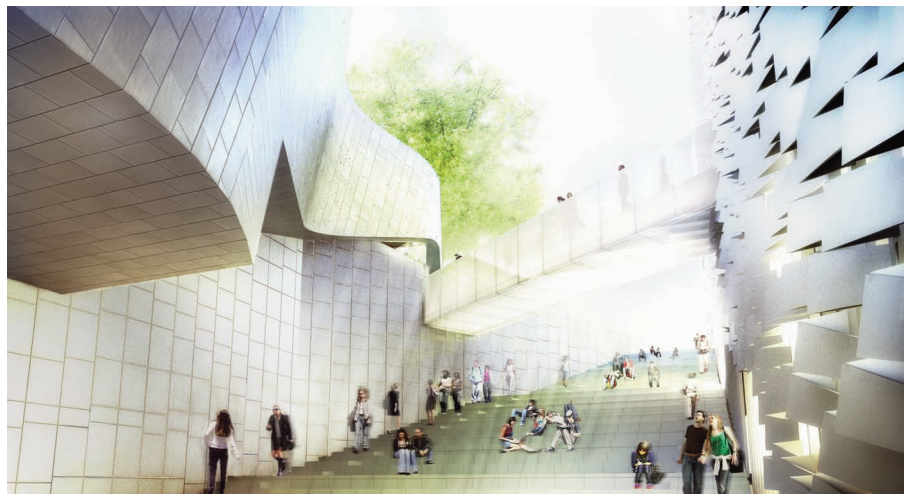
Constructed from a BIM model created by Morley, the 170,000 sf Phase II Expansion of the California Science Center features science museum exhibits, administrative office space and back-of-house support spaces. The exhibits include living habitats, interactive museum elements and Ecosystems, featuring a 188,000 gallon kelp forest tank.

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COURTESY MORPHOSIS

**HOLLYWOOD'S GRANDE ARCHE** continued from front page entertainment-centered internship program, currently located in Burbank.

The \$65.4 million project bears resemblance to Johann Otto von Spreckelsen's Grande Arche de La Défense in Paris, albeit a more contemporary and sustainable version. It also has a distant sibling in Gensler's three-year-old headquarters for the Creative Artists Agency in Century City.

The new building will rise to ten stories at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Gordon Street. Its cube-shaped exterior, covered with a grid of aluminum sun shades, will surround a large void inset with a

**Courtyard passage at the Morphisys-designed satellite building for Emerson College on Sunset Boulevard.**

deconstructed concrete, glass, and steel core that projects toward Sunset. The building is seeking a minimum LEED Silver rating and will feature exterior landscaping as well as a vine-growing trellis along the Gordon Street side, creating a leafy entranceway and shading for a cafe.

The sides of the building will contain residential halls for students, while the center will house classrooms, administrative space, and two retail venues. The ambitious complex, funded largely by the school's trustees, will also include outdoor terraces, outdoor instructional spaces, and

a large open stair ascending from the third to fifth floors.

When the project was announced two years ago, firm founder Thom Mayne said it "makes a significant contribution to one of LA's most dynamic urban contexts." More recently, firm principal Kim Groves added that the quiet exterior is meant to defer to the incredible variety of its neighborhood, and that the core's visual movement would reflect "the intensity of what happens on the inside." The project is set to appear before the LA City Council in mid-August.

**SL**



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COURTESY LEO A DALY

BRADLEY TERMINAL RENOVATION OVERHAULS AGING EYESORE

# ReLAX

It may be the world's fifth busiest international airport, but LAX is arguably the world's ugliest. But a just-completed \$723 million renovation project to the Tom Bradley International Terminal may change that.

Built in time for the 1984 Olympics, the 23-gate, one-million-square-foot mass of beige concrete and steel was an eyesore from the moment of its unveiling. Its confusing layout, inefficiency, and low

lighting have negatively colored so many travelers' first impression of the city.

Project architects Leo A Daly spent nearly 12 years and almost a billion dollars to add, among other things, a 45,000-square-foot baggage screening area, massive upgrades to the arrival and ticketing lobbies and concourses, four new airport lounges, new furniture, restrooms, accessibility measures, elevators and escalators, better tempera-

ture control and ventilation, and a new electrical system.

Renovations also included two new gates capable of handling the enormous Airbus A380 aircraft, multimedia installations, and "dynamic color and brighter views," said Keith Mawson, corporate director of aviation programs for Leo A Daly. The firm did, however, leave the hideous exterior almost intact, focusing instead on getting LEED certification. The team redid the building's lighting control system to reduce energy consumption and installed a new, more energy-efficient HVAC system. The architects used local and sustainable building materials and finishes with a requirement of 70 percent recycled content wherever possible, including recycled epoxy flooring, carpet tiles with low VOC adhesive backing, terrazzo floors comprised of 80 percent recycled material, and 70 percent recycled metal ceilings. High-performance, low-e insulated glass is being used in the two new buildings.

The project, which is the largest in the history of LAX, came in nearly \$18 million less than the \$755 million budget, and was funded with a combination of revenue from bonds, airline reimbursements, facility charges, and airport revenues. Travelers will be happy to hear that the upcoming Bradley West Phase will be completed in December 2012, and will feature 18 new gates and a new 100,000-square-foot eating and shopping "piazza" to rival those in other major international airports. We can only hope.

JAKE TOWNSEND

SAN FRANCISCO'S FOUR PICKS FOR CONTRACT WORK HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON

# WOMEN'S WORK

Every three years, the city of San Francisco sends out an RFQ to architecture firms for its "as-needed work" list, following a rigorous point system to winnow down applicants. Typically, the work consists of tenant improvements and accessibility upgrades.

For the first time, all the preselected firms have female principals. This in spite of the fact that California Proposition 209 forbids San Francisco to give preference to minority- or women-owned firms. But all four studios were beneficiaries of the preferences given to small firms, which is legal.

"The city's Human Rights Commission was put in place to level the playing field for disadvantaged firms," said Gary Hoy, city architect and manager of the city's Bureau of Architecture. Of the four, two are independent firms—Paulett Taggart Architects, Hamilton + Aitken—and two are joint ventures with small firms—Tom Elliot Fisch with Knapp Architects, and Mark Cavagnero Associates with Cary Bernstein Architect.

While these outside contracts are not specifically part of a "design for excellence" program like New York's, observers are hopeful that the city is heading in that direction. "With the slate of architects this time, it looks like they are looking more for good design rather than tons of experience in the public sector," said Paulett Taggart, who made the list for the second time in a row. The city plans to contract out \$4 million in projects, divided among the four firms.

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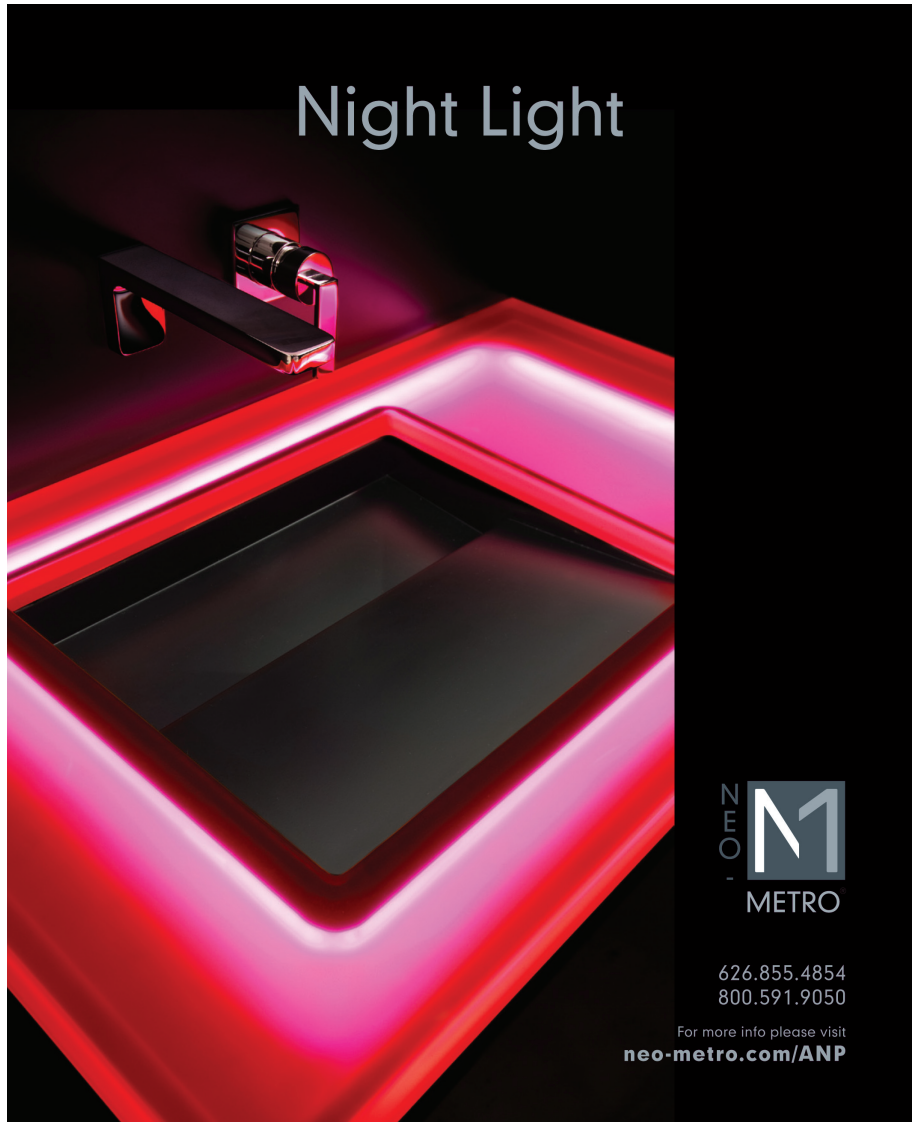


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**HIGH LINE WEST?** continued from front page for its heavy industry and (perhaps) for having the original Der Wienerschnitzel restaurant, has a High Line-inspired plan.

Wilmington's version, for now known as the Harry Bridges Boulevard Buffer, neither extends along an abandoned railroad nor is it particularly narrow like New York's prototype. Instead, it consists of a 30-acre, nine-block-wide stretch of sloping land that separates the busy Port of Wilmington from a residential neighborhood to the north. The \$55 million project is well underway and set to be completed by next summer.

The Port of LA first acquired the land for an expansion of its container terminal, but after a public outcry, it decided to give the stretch back to the public. It has recently made public access a general priority, with new park spaces planned for San Pedro, Avalon, and elsewhere in Wilmington.

"We went from a very adversarial relationship with the Wilmington community to a real partnership," explained Chris Brown, the Port of LA's manager on the project, who has sat in on several public meetings. Brown adds that the port also went from designing a 20-foot-high sound wall to the current berm plan, which adds public parkland to a structure still designed to block out noise, pollution, and visual blight. "People didn't want to feel disconnected from the water," he said.

The new park, designed by San Francisco- and Boston-based Sasaki Associates, will stretch 3,000 feet wide and slope in an angular fashion from a flat area known as the Great Lawn up to about 15 feet above grade, with a walkway along the top—labeled

Rendering of the buffer park.



COURTESY SASAKI

the Paseo—affording views of the Port's massive shipping containers as well as the ocean in the distance. "It's an amazingly unique perspective, something you can't see anywhere else," said Brown.

Other features will include tree groves, open lawns, pavilions, fountains, and an amphitheater. To break up the mass and ease circulation, the berm will have several openings connected via pedestrian bridges. One bridge, a steel span structure designed by Arup, will be the centerpiece of the design.

The park will integrate sustainable ideas like photovoltaics on its structures, drought-tolerant plantings, bioswales for stormwater filtration, an irrigation system using reclaimed water, and extensive tree planting, covering about a quarter of the site.

The park, a major new amenity for this park-poor area, will be tailor-made to host Wilmington's biggest event in late June: the Fiesta del Corazón del Puerto (Heart of the Harbor Fiesta). Acknowledging that similarities to the High Line in New York are tenuous at best, Sasaki principal Stephen Hamwey said, "The High Line was working with that existing platform. We basically created this from scratch to get people up there." **SL**



SHIMODA DESIGN

"We didn't want a boring rectangle," said Shimoda.

"We wanted to create a building that has personality and will be remembered for its shape. We were also interested in creating something that's not a billboard backdrop," he added.

The building will consist of office space and a small Radio and Microphone Museum on the ground floor, parking on the next seven floors, and offices above. The office portion will be clad both with a diagonally braced steel or concrete exterior structure and a more conventional glass and aluminum curtain wall. The parking structure will be clad by flat slab concrete with intricate skin treatments.

The project will include a small water moat at the property line with bridges into the storefronts, canopies on both street frontages, lush street trees and planter buffers, and a lobby reflecting pool. Completion is planned for 2016. **SL**

**Architect:** Shimoda Design Group  
**Developer:** Ametron  
**Location:** 1546 North Argyle Avenue, Hollywood  
**Completion:** 2016

## UNVEILED

### AMETRON ELECTRONICS

It doesn't get much more Hollywood than this. LA architect Joey Shimoda is designing the new headquarters for Ametron

Electronics, a major supplier of production equipment for the film industry. The 20-story, 218,000-square-foot building, located in the center of Hollywood, is inspired by the collection of sleek vintage microphones and radios owned by Ametron owner Fred Rosenthal.

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OPA's shipping container visitors' center.



Owl house by Aiweiwei.

LEFT: OPA; RIGHT: MONIQUE DESCHAINES

THE PRESIDIO HOSTS AN UNUSUAL ART EXHIBIT

## ANIMAL INSTINCTS

Architects haven't always been welcome on the sacrosanct grounds of the Presidio (see Richard Gluckman), but even if grand glass cubes aren't allowed, some very contemporary work has been able to infiltrate the former army base—at least temporarily—in the form of an art exhibit called Presidio Habitats, currently showing in the Fort Scott area.

A group of 25 artists, designers, and architects were invited to design a "habitat" for one of the animals living on the Presidio. The most high-profile name is artist-of-the-moment Ai Weiwei. The Chinese phenom created a series of classic porcelain vessels for the Western screech owl. But there is also a buckyball perched on a tepee by LA

architects Taalman Koch; a stacked-cedar pyramid by Danish firm CEBRA; and an artistic rendering of a dead tree by Fritz Haeg. All the proposals that weren't built are displayed in the visitors' center by Ogrydziak Prillinger Architects (OPA), which created a three-legged triskelion, a departure from routine shipping-container architecture.

One of the more creative interpretations is Jensen Architects' poetic tribute to the great blue heron: ten yellow chairs placed around the Fort Scott meadow, from which visitors are invited to contemplate the landscape (and with luck, see a blue heron). "We didn't literally provide a home for the blue heron, but we're protecting the habitat by asking people

to slow down and respect it," said Mark Jensen.

The exhibit was arranged by the FOR-SITE Foundation, whose tagline is "art about place." The group was founded in 2003 by Cheryl Haines, the owner of San Francisco's Haines Gallery. "Nothing like this has ever happened in a national park—there was no blueprint," said Hal Fischer, FOR-SITE's director of special projects. The exhibit is the organization's second partnership with the Presidio; in 2008, sculptor Andy Goldsworthy, whom the gallery represents, created a 90-foot spire out of salvaged cypress trees that overlooks the park's Inspiration Point. The habitats will be in place through May 2011.

LL



Interior of Polshek-designed concert hall.

COURTESY POLSHEK PARTNERSHIP

STANFORD BREAKS GROUND ON AMBITIOUS NEW CONCERT HALL

## SING A LONG

On May 11, Stanford University broke ground on a new 844-seat performing arts space that will be a key element of an emerging campus arts complex presently anchored by the Cantor Center for Visual Arts. Designed by New York's Polshek Partnership, the \$110 million Bing Concert Hall will open in 2012 or 2013, supplanting the midcentury, functionally problematic 714-seat Dinkelspiel Auditorium as the main venue for Stanford's Lively Arts series. In 1998,

Polshek also oversaw the renovation and expansion of the Cantor.

Prospects for sonic excellence are good, thanks to the involvement of Nagata Associates' Yasuhisa Toyota, the acoustician for Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall. Toyota worked with Polshek's Richard Olcott, who led the project's design. Elements of the auditorium interior bear a resemblance to Disney (albeit at a much smaller scale), such as the fragmented and tiered

"vineyard" seating with beech wood-clad parapets, and the Alaskan yellow cedar stage floor. Toyota's design is meant to accommodate classic unamplified instruments as well as electronically assisted and pure electronic sound. The exterior, in a bow to campus context, will be a large oval drum clad in stucco, fronted by a large glass lobby.

Given its immense financial and intellectual resources, Stanford, which discontinued its architecture program in the 1970s, has been a surprisingly barren environment for architectural excellence. Its evolving arts district should help reverse that trend.

JOHN PASTIER

PRESERVING OAKLAND MUSEUM'S EDGE

## SOFT TOUCH



The new canopy entrance.

TIM GRIFFITH

Take one iconic mid-modern museum, age it 40 years, stir in evolved exhibition techniques, and lightly toss with a sensitive renovation. Chef (and architect) Mark Cavagnero has done just that, and the result is the skillfully recrafted Oakland Museum of California.

Originally designed by Roche and Dinkeloo in 1969, the museum has been lauded as a Brutalist tour de force. Critic Ada Louise Huxtable termed it "revolutionary" at the time. But changing approaches to museum exhibition practices had rendered the building in need of a serious makeover. Furthermore, the series of small exhibit spaces of the original design made the type of cross-disciplinary displays now in vogue nearly impossible.

With two million objects in its collection, the museum also had a serious storage problem. The creation of the California Collections and Research Center, although not accessible to the public, was a critical component of the redesign. Reconfiguring the museum entrance, Cavagnero added a 90-foot sky-lit canopy that emphatically beckons to Oak Street, replacing the ineffective 10<sup>th</sup> Street

entrance. The Galleries of California Art and History, the first of several gallery spaces to be reconfigured, have been melded into one free-flowing space. The gallery lighting has been enhanced and the overall flexibility of the space improved. Further renovation of the Natural Sciences Gallery and educational and classroom spaces is scheduled for completion in 2012.

Renovations of strong architectural statements require a light touch; Cavagnero carefully adjusted the floor plan without altering the original design concept or aesthetic. Apart from the entry canopy, the casual observer might not recognize that a significant renovation has taken place. The improved functionality of the museum, however, is readily sensed. It is easier to locate oneself within the building, and moving about is more intuitive—always desirable characteristics of good architecture. Unchanged were Roche and Dinkeloo's concrete planar elements, rooftop gardens, and strong horizontal sequencing. Cavagnero's hand is scarcely felt, yet the result is a more workable and well-experienced museum.

The brief Brutalist movement

found little expression in the Bay Area (Golden Gate University in San Francisco being the other prominent example) and certainly the Oakland Museum of California was the major work within the style. Renovating a well-known structure is an exercise fraught with difficulty. Copy the existing style and it's campy, make a completely new architectural statement and the original is diminished or even lost. In Cavagnero's hands, neither occurs. Instead, he has found that elusive middle ground where the existing building retains its power and the additions improve on the past. The task was all the more challenging because the building program had evolved beyond its floor plan. Cavagnero's relocating of the entrance, his interior reorganization of galleries, and the expansion of the collections and research areas brought the building's spatial arrangement and mission back into harmony. The result is a public edifice now ready to serve and educate in our time. The "museum of the people," as Roche termed it originally, lives refreshed and renewed, ready to reveal the richness of California history, art, and natural science.

GEORGE CALYS





BELA TEMESVARY

**TOO TALL** continued from front page would be uninhabitable. Baez had agreed in a concession to remove the home's solar panels, lowering the house from 33 feet 4 inches to 32, and said that his neighbors were all supportive of the house. But it was to no avail.

The prefab, modular building at 709 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Venice has three units measuring a total of about 5,500 square feet. Completed in 2004, it glows from within thanks to exterior windows and sliding doors made of translucent fiberglass. These and other elements make the cube look like a Japanese Tatami home floating above the city. The structure also uses radiant heating, which for now is powered by the rooftop solar panels.

According to the LA City Council, the height discrepancy violates the Venice Coastal Specific Plan. The height resulted, said Baez, not from disregard of city standards but from fabrication and measurement errors and from unclear communications with the city. Baez said that the problems arose when the height was measured from the building's alleyway, not centerline, and when fabricated parts didn't match with the original schematics. "We're still puzzled," he said. As for the city: "Every step of the way it was signed off. We didn't do anything without approval," said Baez. "We were deemed 99 percent complete when the height problem was discovered." Finally, Baez tried to invoke a city rule stating that local mechanical systems could

measure as high as 35 feet. The city first agreed, then reneged, according to Baez.

City planner Kevin Jones and building and safety investigator John Kelly beg to differ. Jones says that Baez knew that his building had to be 30 feet tall. The building, he said, was granted that height in 2002 as part of a discretionary action allowing him to raise the height from 25 to 30 feet, and the 30-foot height was specified in his plans submitted to the city. "If you tell us that your building is going to be 30 feet in height then it has to be 30 feet in height," said Jones. "When you are an architect and you prepare plans, it means you are legally responsible for following all the laws that are in place," he added. His planning report concludes that, "A Specific Plan Exception is not appropriate relief post hoc from a hardship created through negligence or misrepresentation." Jones added that while some buildings in Venice can have mechanical systems measuring up to 35 feet, the buildings themselves must

**Above: The interior of architect Mark Baez's loft home. Below: The glowing-lantern look of the M Cube has become a local landmark in Venice.**

still measure under 30 feet.

"Their side of the story suggests that I didn't have any approvals and I just built it on my own. I got every approval," said Baez, adding that, "Yes, the drawings indicate that the building was to be 30 feet. The result was an oversight by myself, my contractor, and everyone else."

As for the contractor error, Kelly said it wasn't his department's fault that Baez built the project higher than planned. "That's between him and his builders, isn't it?" he said. Baez must now come to terms with the city's criminal proceedings against him. The architect has been living in the building and renting out units for years, despite lacking a certificate of occupancy, held up due to the height limit battle. Baez will argue that the city sent him mixed signals all along. **SL**



BELA TEMESVARY

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Gehry's sculptural forms present personalities to the street.



# TEACHING LAS VEGAS

Frank Gehry once vowed never to build in Las Vegas, a place where serious architecture is submerged in a tsunami of kitsch or fatally compromised by

commercial imperatives. But Larry Ruvo, who made a fortune as Nevada's chief liquor distributor, refused to take "no" for an answer. Ruvo has been a passionate

supporter of Alzheimer's research since the loss of his father, Lou, to that disease. Having formed an alliance with a major medical institution, he wanted

a building that would be a magnet. He persuaded Gehry that this was a worthy cause and gave him creative freedom to design a research facility linked to an events space that would play a supporting role by generating income from rentals. The Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health was inaugurated on May 21.

It's located on the bleak north side of the city, just off Interstate 15. The small corner site is flanked by a vast and hermetically sealed design center, city offices that resemble a cartoon castle, and a future performing arts center and park. Gehry's modestly scaled structure holds its own, presenting four distinct but interrelated faces to wide boulevards

and parking lots. The Life Activity Center (an events space) is contained within an irregular cluster of sculptural forms, clad in brushed stainless plates with punched-out windows and skylight openings. This carapace swoops down over a courtyard as a bowed trellis, and the expanded openings cast a pattern of dappled shade over the pavers. A supporting skeleton of exposed steel beams links the public facility to the stacked white stucco blocks of treatment rooms, labs, and a fourth-floor office suite, all lit by expansive bay windows. Reception and a small library open off a breezeway, and the inner wall has panels of aqua, lemon, and red as a foil to the silver and white palette of the complex.

The sculpted stainless steel skin that Gehry first employed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis has evolved over the past two decades to provide an ever-changing yet immediately recognizable signature. To dismiss the architect as the metal man is absurd; his preferred material has unlimited expressive potential, and is rarely used in isolation. At Ruvo, there's a joyful exuberance and geometric invention that captures the spontaneity of conceptual models. In commissioning the Experience Music Project in Seattle, the client invited Gehry to be "swoopy," but all the excitement was on the outside, relinquishing the interior to a conventional and claustrophobic set of exhibits. Here, inner and outer are closely integrated, and the rational and intuitive wings of the building are linked like the two halves of the human brain—an apt image for this institution.

The Ruvo Center is also a reproach to the wasteful ways of Las Vegas, where scarce natural resources are squandered on golf courses, fountains, and

blazing signage. Both blocks open up to the north, and the trellis deflects sunlight from a courtyard that is open to breezes from east and west. The small skylights and windows are triple glazed and can be shut off with motorized blinds. Building materials were sourced from the region. The clinic roof is white, cooling is automatically shut off whenever the buildings are not in use, and extensive use is made of LEDs. The landscaping makes inventive use of drought-resistant plantings.

This is also a rare instance of an architect exercising total control over a project, installing his own furniture and lighting and selecting the art. But the star of the show is the interior of the activity center, which is a true original, radically different in form and effect from anything that has come before. It evokes an enchanted forest glade, a soaring white billow of foliage, with 199 openings to admit natural light, partially supported on square trunks and angular branches. Two stylized trees are located inside the glass entry wall, which frames and reflects the complex structure over the courtyard.

Beyond this portal, everything seems to be in motion, swaying in a spectral wind that tosses branches every which way. In contrast to the rigor and symmetry of the Walt Disney Hall, this interior is simply an uplifting place to celebrate weddings, raise funds, and party. Gehry has liberated his artistry from programmatic constraints and is able to turn gestures into concrete form. Architecture has been likened to frozen music; here, music is on the boil. Surface and structure combine to tilt, dart, thrust, and recede in ways that defy categorization.

**MICHAEL WEBB**

The courtyard extends the interior event space.



MICHAEL WEBB, MATT CARBONE



Three faces of the Segerstrom Science Center, with its highway facade etched with Bible verses from Genesis.



ART GRAY

**AND THEN THERE WAS ARCHITECTURE**  
continued from front page about 20 minutes from LA. The school was California's first Evangelical Christian college, and designing its new science center was not likely to be an exercise in design rationality.

Named for well-known Orange County philanthropist Henry Segerstrom (he was the main donor for the Segerstrom Center for the Performing Arts in Costa Mesa), the 70,000-square-foot, \$42 million building houses the school's departments of biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics. It was designed by LA firm AC Martin.

The recently-completed structure, set amid native landscaping next to a large parking lot, is composed of two large linear bars, two and three stories in height, that intersect at an angle to form an open-air interior courtyard

featuring a pond filled with fish and turtles as well as seating and breakout spaces. The facade is a muscular but tempered combination of light channel glass, black cement board, and brown Trespa panels marking the entrances. Inside, classrooms and labs are softened with light colors and wood finishes, and several patios make break-time all the more pleasant. Several hallways have floor-to-ceiling glass to bring more light inside.

But that's where subtleties end. Onto the channel glass facade, the school—which espouses Creationism—has etched verses from Genesis in large letters, easily visible on busy Foothill Boulevard, an extension of historic Route 66. One reads, “And in the beginning, God created heaven and earth,” followed by more verses all etched in large letters. Even more Biblical texts are posted

on the interior hallways and in the main lecture hall, among them “Let Us make man in Our image” and “God’s creativity in nature.”

School officials admit that the signage is provocative, but they see it as a way to encourage discussion about the interaction between faith and science. Each class at the college, from calculus to Shakespeare, includes “faith integration,” exploring how religion can inform that field of study and vice versa.

“The words make a statement about the position of the university as followers of Christ,” said Bruce Spalding, Azusa’s chair of Biology and Chemistry. Despite such forceful religious rhetoric, Spalding seems open-minded. The school, he said, “encourages all faculty and students to find a harmony between what’s described in the Bible and what science believes.” He added, “We

believe the Bible is true, but we give a wide range of perspectives and let the students come up with their own way.”

This questioning and exploration is a refreshing refutation of the doctrinaire attitude many expect from an evangelical college. And architecturally, the rationalism of form and function is clearly on display. The writing, said AC Martin partner David Martin, “gives the architecture another layer of richness.”

The center is located on the site of the former Azusa Foothill Drive-In. Though it closed in 2001, the theater’s lively Googie-style sign still stands. It now advertises events at the college, but one can’t help recalling the more profane encounters that probably once took place here.

SL

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# MADE IN MEXICO



COLLABORATIVE IN  
TEMPERAMENT AND  
FRUGAL BY NECESSITY,  
INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTS  
ARE THRIVING  
IN MEXICO CITY

BY MICHAEL WEBB







**Previous page, clockwise from top left:** JSA's Spanish Cultural Center; TEN's Chopo Museum; Rojkind Arquitectos' Tamayo Museum; Tatiana Bilbao's project for the Jinhua architecture park in China.

**This page, above and left:** TEN's Chopo Museum in the Santa María de Ribera district of Mexico City.

**Facing page, top:** Benjamin Romano's Torre Tres Picos.

**Facing page, below:** Alberto Kalach's Kurimanzutto Gallery of Contemporary Art in the Colonia Roma district.

Mexico is getting terrible press for drug-related violence—to the point that many wonder if it's safe to venture South of the Border. You get a very different perspective on these troubles from Mexico City, a vibrant metropolis that's far from the gun battles in Ciudad Juárez. Corruption—along with pollution and gross economic inequalities—are ubiquitous, but the mood in the capital is surprisingly buoyant. That's especially true among younger architects who are cultivating a new level of inventiveness here, responding creatively to context and social needs. Frugal or refined, high- or low-tech, their work shares a lack of pretension and marks a sharp break from the ponderous monumentality of Teodoro González de León, Ricardo Legorreta, and other establishment firms.

There's a warm collegiality among the younger practitioners of Mexico City, a rare and welcome phenom-

enon in this often cutthroat profession. Many were at school together, collaborate professionally, and meet socially in the Condesa and Polanco districts. Veteran architect Benjamin Romano explains the optimism that sustains him and his colleagues at a time when peers in the U.S. and Europe are struggling for jobs and laying off staff: "Mexicans have endured so many financial crises that they prefer to put their money into bricks, not banks, providing their own funding for construction," he said.

Enrique Norten led the way, establishing TEN Arquitectos in 1986 and a second office in New York in 2003. Over the past two decades, he has progressed from crisp cubic houses and condo blocks to the Habita Hotel (where he wrapped the concrete skeleton of an existing building in translucent glass) and on to large-scale commercial and residential projects in both





cities. He was one of the first to reject the “Mexican architect” tag as disparaging, and his work has a cool universality. That’s evident in his latest building: a bold addition to the Chopo Museum in the Santa María de Ribera district. The linear steel-and-concrete block appears to float within the lofty void of a prefabricated cast-iron hall imported from Germany a century ago, and formerly used as a museum of natural history. Now it’s an animated, university-administered center for contemporary arts. The addition contains ramped galleries on two levels and a library at the top beneath

the old ceiling vault. A small theater and cinema are located below the ground floor, and are accessed from a sunken central lobby. The clean lines, open spaces, and glass-railed staircases of the addition complement the springy elegance of the old hall, a bold contemporary statement in its own day.

Alberto Kalach is a near-contemporary of Norten and established his office, Taller de Arquitectura X, around the same time. He developed a visionary plan for the capital, *Return to the City of the Lakes*, and has realized a few exceptional buildings. Casa GGG has the mystery of a pre-Columbian temple,

but it’s stripped to essentials: a massive bunker, admitting narrow shafts of light from above and opening onto gardens. More recently, Kalach transformed a carpentry workshop in the Colonia Roma district into the Kurimanzutto Gallery for contemporary art. Like Chopo, it establishes a lively dialogue between old and new. Glass endwalls and a roof lantern in the wood-vaulted gallery pull in abundant natural light, and flush-glazed windows in the street facade serve a suite of offices. The sculpture court has some of the sublime simplicity of Luis Barragán’s spaces, and the gallery opens

up to a sybaritic garden in the rear.

Fernando Romero worked with Rem Koolhaas in Rotterdam, and was project director for OMA’s Casa de Música in Porto, Portugal. That influence shows in the theoretical manifestos and radical visions he has conceived in his Laboratory of Architecture (LAR), which he opened in 1999. The Soumaya Museum, now under construction in the Nuevo Polanco district, is his most ambitious work to date: a stack of galleries for an eclectic private collection, linked by ramps and wrapped in a flared shell of ceramic tiles that resembles

an asymmetrical cooling tower. An ambitious project nearby is Benjamin Romano’s Torre Tres Picos, a ten-story office tower shoehorned onto a small traffic island in a busy intersection. Two walls are clad in steel, the third in glass, and each facade has a distinctive character. Romano is also starting the Torre Reforma in Mexico City, which when completed will be the tallest in Latin America at just over 750 feet.

Michel Rojkind was a drummer in a rock band before launching his architectural practice in 1998. A pierced eyebrow and assertive manner set him

off from his understated peers, but he’s quickly won acclaim and major clients, notably for the Nestlé factory and chocolate museum in Querétaro. The Tamayo Museum, jointly designed with BIG of Copenhagen, is currently mired in political turmoil, but construction has begun on Rojkind Arquitectos’ 40-story mixed-use tower on Paseo Reforma, the most prestigious boulevard in Mexico City. It will house retail, condos, and a five-star hotel at the top in a shaft that is stepped back in nine sections with a fragmented, angled glass facade.

Architect-developer Javier Sánchez’s firm JSA has





**Clockwise from top:**  
Rooftop plaza of Rojkind's  
Tamayo Museum; a corridor  
in JSA's Spanish Cultural  
Center; Romero's Soumayer  
Art Museum.



designed more than 30 elegant condo blocks in the Condesa district, and is now branching out into large-scale work for a leading construction company in the capital, and for the Ministry of Education and Health in Tlaxcala. Despite his commercial success, Sanchez has a deep sensitivity toward the historical core of Mexico City, rehabilitating two tenement blocks for poor migrants, and extending the Spanish Cultural Center, which occupies a 17<sup>th</sup>-century house overlooking the cathedral. Sánchez's bold addition provides new program spaces and offices on a vacant site to the rear. The upper stories are set back from the narrow street and lit from concrete louvers that filter the light, and a roof terrace shaded by a retractable awning links the two buildings.

Tatiana Bilbao is a major talent and is currently adding staff to handle 40 varied projects scattered around

the country. Surprisingly, these do not include Mexico City. Her ambitious proposal for a circular plaza to serve as the city's bicentennial monument was not accepted, and an impressive gallery for a leading art patron is difficult to access. This year, Bilbao was selected by New York's Architectural League to be one of its Emerging Voices (as was Michel Rojkind).

Overall, the action and talent in Mexican architecture are still focused on Mexico City. When the latest batch of projects is complete, the capital may well be recognized as one of the architectural centers of the world. But while these architects are by nature and inclination collaborative, there have been few over-the-border exchanges with U.S. architects. It's our loss, for we have much to learn from the way this new generation of Mexican practitioners are finding fresh solutions to old problems.

**LA CRITIC MICHAEL WEBB IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.**





JUNE

WEDNESDAY 30

LECTURES

**Olga Tsapina**

**A Forgotten War**

7:30 p.m.

The Huntington Library,

Art Collections, and

Botanical Gardens

1151 Oxford Rd.

San Marino

www.huntington.org

**Peter Bohlin**

5:30 p.m.

AIA San Francisco

130 Sutter St.

San Francisco

www.aiaf.org

**Sarah Vure**

**American Art, 1850–1900:**

**The Hudson River School to**

**Impressionism**

1:30 p.m.

The Bowers Museum

2002 North Main St.

Santa Ana

www.bowers.org

WITH THE KIDS

**Look at Me! Self Portraits**

1:30 p.m.

San Diego Museum of Art

1450 El Prado, Balboa Park

San Diego

www.sdmart.org

JULY

THURSDAY 1

LECTURE

**Azby Brown**

**Just Enough:**

**Lessons in Living Green**

**from Traditional Japan**

12:00 p.m.

AIA San Francisco

130 Sutter St.

San Francisco

www.aiaf.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Dennis Luedeman**

Braunstein/Quay Gallery

430 Clementina St.

San Francisco

www.bquayartgallery.com

**Jack N. Mohr**

**Behind the Scenes**

Artamo Gallery

11 West Anapamu St.

Santa Barbara

www.artamogallery.com

**Maira Kalman**

**Various Illuminations**

**(of a Crazy World)**

Contemporary Jewish

Museum

736 Mission St.

San Francisco

www.thecjm.org

FRIDAY 2

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Damian Fulton:**

**Surfploitation**

**Robert Palacios:**

**The Game of Life**

La Luz de Jesus Gallery

4633 Hollywood Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.laluzdejesus.com

**Elijah Blue**

**Stuff of Legends**

Madison Gallery

23410 Civic Center Way

Malibu

www.kantorgallery.com

SATURDAY 3

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Quilts: Two Centuries of**

**American Tradition and**

**Technique**

The Bowers Museum

2002 North Main St.

Santa Ana

www.bowers.org

**Maureen Gallace,**

**Richard Hughes, et al.**

**Country Music**

Blum & Poe

2727 South La Cienega Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.blumandpoe.com

**Selections from the Hammer**

**Contemporary Collection**

The Hammer Museum

10899 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.hammer.ucla.edu

**Bernie Lubell**

**Conservation of Intimacy**

San Jose Institute of

Contemporary Art

560 South 1st St., San Jose

www.sjica.org

MONDAY 5

LECTURE

**Jonathan Gold**

1:00 p.m.

Art Center College of Design

1700 Lida St., Pasadena

www.artcenter.edu

WEDNESDAY 7

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**David Hollen**

**Jen Heaslip: Agua**

Bert Green Fine Art

102 West 5th St., Los Angeles

www.bgfa.us

**David Wilson**

**Gatherings/MATRIX 233**

Berkeley Art Museum and

Pacific Film Archive

2621 Durant Ave., Berkeley

www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

**Tony Berlant**

**Matt Wedel: Child Flower**

**Tree Landscape**

L.A. Louver

45 North Venice Blvd., Venice

www.lalouer.com

THURSDAY 8

LECTURE

**Chris Patillo**

**Historic American**

**Landscapes Survey**

6:30 p.m.

AIA San Francisco

130 Sutter St., San Francisco

www.aiaf.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Chen Chieh-Jen**

**Western Enterprises Inc.**

Roy and Edna Disney/

CalArts Theater

631 West 2nd St., Los Angeles

www.redcat.org

FRIDAY 9

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Mika Rottenberg**

**New Work**

San Francisco Museum of

Modern Art

151 3rd St., San Francisco

www.sfmoma.org

**Eric Baudelaire**

The Hammer Museum

10899 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.hammer.ucla.edu

SATURDAY 10

EVENT

**Special Dose**

10:00 p.m.

18th Street Art Center

1639 18th St., Santa Monica

www.18thstreet.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Van Arno and Chris Pugliese**

Shooting Gallery

839 Larkin St., San Francisco

www.shootinggallerysf.com

**Caitlin Lonegan**

**Christopher Miles**

ACME.

6150 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.acmelosangeles.com

**Jennie Ottinger**

Kantor Gallery

7025 Melrose Ave.

Los Angeles

www.kantorgallery.com

**Ansel Adams:**

**Portrait of America**

Monterey Museum of

Art La Mirada

720 Via Mirada

Monterey

www.montereyart.org

**Andre Ethier**

**Actualized, and**

**It Feels So Good**

Honor Fraser

2622 South La Cienega Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.honorfraser.com

**Rena Small**

**Early Polaroid Work,**

**1975–1982**

Jancar Gallery

961 Chung King Rd.

Los Angeles

www.jancargallery.com

SUNDAY 11

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Dennis Hopper**

**Double Standard**

Museum of

Contemporary Art

250 South Grand Ave.

Los Angeles

www.moca.org

WEDNESDAY 14

LECTURES

**J. Michael Padgett**

**The Niobid Painter in Athens**

7:30 p.m.

The J. Paul Getty Villa

17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.

Pacific Palisades

www.getty.edu

**Suzanne Snyder**

**Remembering**

**Vintage Fashion**

1:30 p.m.

The Bowers Museum

2002 North Main St.

Santa Ana

www.bowers.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Picture Mechanics:**

**“KABOOM!”**

La Luz de Jesus Gallery

4633 Hollywood Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.laluzdejesus.com

**Hauntology**

Berkeley Art Museum and

Pacific Film Archive

2621 Durant Ave.

Berkeley

www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

THURSDAY 15

EVENT

**Patterns for Paws**

5:30 p.m.

Pacific Design Center

8687 Melrose Ave.

West Hollywood

www.pacificdesigncenter.com

**Infinite City:**

**Monarchs and Queens**

7:00 p.m.

San Francisco Museum of

Modern Art

151 3rd St., San Francisco

www.sfmoma.org

FILM

**My Tehran for Sale**

(Granaz Moussavi, 2009)

97 min.

5:30 p.m.

Palm Springs Art Museum

101 Museum Dr., Palm Springs

www.psmuseum.org

FRIDAY 16

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Jorge Pardo**

**Bulgogi**

Gagosian Gallery

456 North Camden Dr.

Beverly Hills

www.gagosian.com

SATURDAY 17

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Gemstone Carvings:**

**Masterworks by**

**Harold Van Pelt**

The Bowers Museum

2002 North Main St.

Santa Ana

www.bowers.org

**Picturing Modernity**

**New Topographics:**

**Photographs of a**

**Man-Altered Landscape**

San Francisco Museum of

Modern Art

151 3rd St., San Francisco

www.sfmoma.org

WITH THE KIDS

**Trashy Fun with**

**Aaron Kramer**

1:30 p.m.

Craft and Folk Art Museum

5814 Wilshire Blvd.

Los Angeles

www.cafam.org

SUNDAY 18

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Viva La Revolucion:**

**A Dialogue with the**

**Urban Landscape**

Museum of Contemporary

Art San Diego

1100 Kettner Blvd., San Diego

www.mcasd.org



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER JUNE 30, 2010



COURTESY RIZZOLI

## It Never Rains

*Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism, 1900–1970*  
Thomas S. Hines  
Rizzoli, \$95.00

Ardent modernists and book lovers have equal reason to celebrate this splendid production, and to congratulate its publisher. Succinct yet meticulously researched chapters explore the origins and flowering of the modern movement in Southern California. In contrast to so many mega-scrapbooks of stunning images and multilingual captions, it offers nourishment for the mind as

much as for the eye. Here are insights and visual delights of a quality you'll never find online. The designer, Green Dragon, has done an exemplary job of seamlessly weaving text and pictures together and setting them off with luxurious expanses of white space. *Architecture of the Sun* is as cool as a vintage Richard Neutra house.

Tom Hines, a native of Oxford, Mississippi, arrived in

LA in 1968, around the same time as Reyner Banham and David Hockney, and all three have enhanced perceptions of a city most outsiders disparage. *Architecture of the Sun* is his magnum opus, drawing on 40 years of teaching, writing, and exploring the modernist legacy. He traces its roots from the Greene brothers' Craftsman bungalows to the pioneering work of Irving Gill and Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright's art deco houses. There's a masterly comparison of Schindler and Neutra, the Austrian émigrés who embodied the twin strains of expressionism and rationalism that have shaped LA architecture down to the

present. Neutra's protégés—including Ain, Soriano, and Harris—receive their due, and Hines provides a judicious summary of Craig Ellwood as an impresario who inspired his associates but stole credit for their creativity. He evokes the regional tradition and sketches the context within which these architects worked.

The book provides a brilliant synthesis of a drama with many themes and players. The strongest sections, on Gill and Neutra, reprise the texts of Hines' books on those architects, but there is much new material. Architectural descriptions are enlivened by portraits of remarkable clients who took chances and often

sacrificed themselves in the cause of artistic experimentation. But the last two chapters are anti-climactic. Hines seems to have little appreciation for John Lautner, whose achievements in the 1960s far outshone that of Neutra and the other rationalists. It's ironic that his cursory or dismissive comments mirror those that were directed at Schindler during his lifetime. More space is devoted to the corporate modernism of Welton Beckett and William Pereira, whose work (most notably the Music Center and LACMA) symbolizes LA leaders' eagerness to settle for mediocrity. (It was the suits, remember, who fought Gehry's vision for Walt Disney Concert Hall.) In

**Clockwise, from left: Pierre Koenig and model at the Bailey house; Dione Neutra at VDL house; Rudolph Schindler (balcony), Freemans, and Dione at Lovell beach house; Robinson's Store by Beckett & Pereira, 1952.**

essence, nothing has changed. *Architecture of the Sun* concludes on the same low note as the architecture it chronicles: 1970 was a bad year all around. What matters are the decades of innovation that went before. Here is a body of work that captures the spirit of place and retains its power to inspire, in California and around the world.

**LA CRITIC MICHAEL WEBB IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.**



Bucky, aging but still visionary, and the Union Car Dome, right.



## A LEGACY ROBBED

**A Necessary Ruin: The Story of Buckminster Fuller and The Union Car Dome**

Directed by Evan Mather  
Narrated by Frances Anderton  
Opened March 22, Dwell on Design

With firms like Arup and Buro Happold making possible the most ambitious architecture of today, it's important to remember that they weren't the first. Buckminster Fuller, whose architecture was as intertwined with engineering as any designer in history, is the father of the modern marriage between ambitious, expressive architecture and radical engineering. This makes it all the more amazing that one of his most astounding designs, the Union Car Dome in Louisiana, was allowed to be destroyed just a few years ago.

Director Evan Mather, a Louisiana native, captures this story in his riveting new docu-

mentary *A Necessary Ruin*, which manages not only to make engineering sexy and preservation politics compelling, but succinctly tells the tale of one of the most tragic architectural plunderings in recent memory.

Fuller's Union Tank Car Dome, completed in 1958 and sited just north of Baton Rouge, was at the time of its completion the largest clear-span structure in the world, measuring 384 feet in diameter. The building, a real-world example of Fuller's geodesic dome, was a self-supporting, lightweight steel edifice enabled by the interdependence of compression (steel pipes) and tension (metal panels). Engineered by local Dick Lehrer, who provides commentary in the film, it covered Union Car's revolutionary train turntable, a key link in the movement of crude oil to local refineries. Prior to this construction, such domes were chiefly present at exhibits and fairs, but this one proved how practical such a structure could be.

Photographer Ivan Masser called the dome "the most beautiful thing in the world," and his many pictures in the movie back up this assertion. The scope and geometric purity of the structure really were breathtaking, and the film captures views, videos, and commentary to bring it to vivid life. (Unfortunately, the audio on some of the interviews is a bit poor, but with a super-slim budget, it's a wonder Mather was able to make his 30-minute documentary at all.) We learn some precious details: that Fuller grew up virtually blind until age seven, and thus was forced to think differently about engineering. And Fuller didn't call himself an architect, but a "comprehensive anticipatory design scientist." Try putting that on your business card.



COURTESY EVAN MATHER

The region's dependence on refining offshore oil remains as timely as ever, given the situation in the Gulf of Mexico. But whether you support offshore drilling or not, it remains the largest moneymaker in the region, and Fuller's dome played a huge role in that operation for years.

That is, until rail company Kansas City Southern purchased the dome around 2000. At that point, the size of most refinery freight cars had grown, making the train turntable, and thus the dome, obsolete. Instead of trying to preserve or adapt the structure (as was done with a twin structure created near St. Louis), the company allowed it to deteriorate, and then in 2007, a year before the building was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, they demolished it.

The secretive process of demolition set off the largest outcry among locals and architectural historians. If they had been warned, perhaps they could have raised money to relocate it. The movie is a compelling reminder to all who think our most cherished monuments are safe from harm.

**SAM LUBELL IS AN'S WEST COAST EDITOR.**

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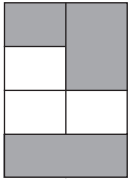
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COURTESY LEDDY MAYTUM STACY

**Left: William Leddy of Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, San Francisco.**

# Getting Past Green

This spring, the twin calamities of an erupting Icelandic volcano and a busted oil well in the Gulf of Mexico served as spectacular reminders of the fragility of modern life and of our profound dependence upon a complex natural world. Another powerful reminder came this May when the National Academy of Sciences released a series of reports calling for immediate action to address global climate change. Strongly emphasizing that the time for “business as usual” is over, the academy’s report stated, “The U.S. should act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop a national strategy to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change.”

Meanwhile, scientists report that glaciers are melting faster than earlier predictions and the world is in the grip of the “sixth great extinction” of species, driven by the destruction of natural habitats, hunting, and climate change. It’s an overwhelming barrage of distressing news that makes many of us want to “stick our heads in the ever-warming sand,” as one observer put it. Surely no one can rationally deny that we live on a planet in serious distress.

And yet when it comes to taking immediate action on energy and climate change, mass denial appears to be in full blossom this spring. The disappointing failure of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December was followed in March by an equally disturbing Gallup poll. It reported a signifi-

cant increase in skepticism about climate change among American voters, with 48 percent now believing that the seriousness of climate change is “generally exaggerated”—up from 31 percent in 1997. In the face of overwhelming international scientific consensus that climate change is real and largely caused by human activities, the national conversation about our shared future has deteriorated into a politically charged argument between “believers” and “non-believers.”

Surprisingly, it’s not much different among architects, where climate change denial and “green fatigue” appear to be almost as prevalent. Indeed, we have our own “believers” and “non-believers” in the relative importance of deeply sustainable design and the role architects can play in helping to combat climate change. Despite thousands of articles, conferences, and position papers on sustainable design over the past 20 years, an October 2009 *Architect* magazine poll reported that only 46 percent of responding architects agreed that “It’s vital that we design and build sustainably, in order to conserve scarce resources and prevent further global warming.”

Whether due to the overexposure of all things sustainable, misconceptions about the true costs of resource-efficient buildings, or an unwillingness to reconsider long-held design values, we are still a divided profession on this issue. There are separate journals for archi-

tecture and green building; separate awards programs for design excellence and energy-efficient design; separate studios for design and sustainable design in many of our architecture schools. In fact, the popular conception of architecture itself remains divided into separate categories: great design and sustainable design.

The tepid interest expressed toward resource-efficient design by many of our most celebrated architects—the thought leaders of our profession—contributes further to this division. Their ambivalence is manifested in well-published projects that display stunning formal and material invention, but offer only cursory nods to resource efficiency. Occasionally, a more direct opinion is expressed, as Frank Gehry did famously this April at a public appearance in Chicago. When asked about climate change and sustainable design, Gehry responded in part that the costs of making a green building are “enormous,” and “they don’t pay back in your lifetime.” The blogospheric dust-up that followed is one of the most striking public displays yet of the gulf that remains within our profession between our notions of design excellence and sustainable design.

The rapidly mounting evidence demonstrates that we can no longer afford this false distinction. Five years ago, the AIA published its “Sustainable Architectural Practice Position Statement,” which echoed Ed Mazria’s *Architecture 2030.org* by calling

for the profession to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels used to construct and operate new and renovated buildings to zero by 2030. Needless to say, this is no small task to achieve in a mere 20 years, and adding a few “green” features to our buildings clearly isn’t going to get us there. To come even close, we will need to get past our current conceptions of “green” design and fully integrate the pursuit of high-performance, net-zero energy building within our overarching concepts of design excellence. We will need to rethink our fundamental design aspirations—many of which are firmly rooted in the energy-rich oil age—and find new architectural languages that express and celebrate the pressing realities of a post-carbon world. But the first and perhaps biggest challenge is to convince every architect and every client that this effort is worthy of our collective, undivided attention, and not just a boring, trendy distraction as some still claim.

Voluntarily broadening the long-held core design values of our profession focused on form, material innovation, and function, while critical to long-term success, will likely be a very slow process. The significance is in getting past “green” as an alternative, thus exclusive, approach. Already underway, this process requires the active support of every practicing architect across all spectrums.

Zero-energy building should be required by law. While California’s landmark Green Building Code and the upcoming International Green Construction Code (IGCC) are important first steps, our building codes should be pushed further to require radical resource efficiency in architecture, including net-zero energy and carbon-neutral construction. When this occurs, three very important results will follow: First, these measures will no longer be seen as voluntary or “alternative” by building owners, and every building will be required to meet rigorous energy performance criteria. Second, the integration of these measures will become a matter of course for every architect, and the full creativity of the profession will be brought to bear on addressing its challenges. Finally, entrepreneurial innovation will be unleashed across the nation, helping to accelerate the development of new, low-cost carbon-neutral technologies.

It is equally important to integrate design thinking into

our schools. Universities have been leaders in research and education surrounding resource-efficient design since the early 1970s. However, deeply sustainable design is still not fully engaged in the design studios of many architecture schools, thus reinforcing the artificial divisions that already exist between the ideals of design excellence and resource-efficiency. More work needs to be done to fully integrate design thinking and appropriately prepare young architects for a challenging future.

The need for advanced, low-energy buildings is outpacing the capacity of our digital tools to design them, and the need for better energy-modeling software is becoming critical. Today, this software is mainly managed by outside consultants, and the accuracy of the data can be problematic. But since many of the earliest design decisions are the most important, particularly in high-performance building design, architects need simple, accurate energy modeling tools that we can use directly in our design process.

The time has come to eliminate energy efficiency design award programs. These award programs served an important purpose in the early days of the environmental design movement when these measures were widely viewed as optional. Today, however, when every building should be designed for aggressive resource efficiency, separate energy efficiency award programs tend to reinforce the balkanization of design and weaken the design culture of our profession. The efforts of AIA National, AIA California Council, and an increasing number of local chapters to require energy efficiency metrics in their architectural design awards programs are laudable steps in the right direction. But these are often still optional judging criteria that juries might be tempted to ignore. The AIA should accelerate and rigorously enforce efforts to make every design awards program require advanced resource-efficiency as a prerequisite for design excellence.

Let’s get past our paler notions of “green design” and stop fussing over arcane LEED points to get to the real business of fully integrating radical resource-efficiency within our concepts of design excellence. Only then can we whole-heartedly focus the transformative power of design on the greatest challenge of our generation: helping to lead our society to a prosperous, carbon-neutral future. We can afford to do nothing less.

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